

THE SCOTTISH REFORMING COUNCILS

1549 to 1559

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Nunquam reformati quia nunquam deformati. So the Carthusians boasted their superiority to other Orders in which enthusiasts for primitive purity had arisen and organised Reformed Congregations within or independent of the parent Order. The Mediaeval Church never made any such claim. The Papacy began its ascent to power by being captured, if we may say so, by the Cluniac Reform Movement of the 10th/11th centuries. In its best days it had no more potent weapon than its profession, expressed alike in the sending of Legates and in the summoning of Councils, of a mission of reformation. Good men hoped and believed that a spiritual power raised high above local interests and temptations would be able to maintain a pure discipline throughout the Catholic Church. For this rôle the Papacy was obviously cast.

Unhappily power corrupts even ecclesiastics ; and already Grosseteste, Bishop of Lincoln, 1235-1253, a convinced Papalist, has to confess disappointment with "unapostolic" abuses and corruptions in the exercise of allegedly Apostolic authority. Government, even spiritual government, demands finance, and the methods adopted by the Papacy to finance its government of the Universal Church, necessary as they may have been, inevitably led to abuses which came to a head during the Great Schism, 1378-1415. The general obligation, *deformata reformare*, became definitely *Reformatio ecclesiae in capite et in membris*. In the Conciliar period *Causa Reformationis* was complicated by the Curialist-Conciliarist controversy in which victory rested virtually with the Papacy. Henceforth it lived by making its own bargains with the secular powers, whereby abuses became more and more scandalous, and the very word Reform, when spoken outside and too loudly, came to sound at Rome like a threat. When after much pressure Paul III summoned the Council of Trent he did his best to keep the attention of the Fathers concentrated on doctrinal questions and as far as possible from the matter of Reform. It is true that in the period immediately preceding the Reformation there were not lacking sporadic reforming movements, chiefly within the monastic orders. No doubt they contributed within limited circles to the reformation of morals and the advancement of sound learning. Might they in time have repeated the Cluniac achievement ? It is unprofitable to speculate.

Adrian VI's brief tenure of the Papacy suggests the extreme unlikelihood of immediate reform ; though what could be done under favourable circumstances may be illustrated by the reform of the Spanish Church. Elsewhere it was the Lutheran revolt with its new religious insight and new theological emphasis that compelled the remnant Church to set its house in order.

Scotland with its turbulent history had its full share of ecclesiastical abuses. Here too there were examples of reformers of the late mediaeval type ; e.g. Chrystal of Kinloss and Myln of Cambuskenneth whose pupil and protégé, Robert Richardson, achieved wider renown by his writings demanding reform in the Augustinian Order. He, it appears, finally went over to the Reformation proper. Among Bishops, Elphinstone of Aberdeen is famous, and Archbishop Forman's Diocesan Statutes (1516-21) may be held as evidence that he too was a reformer. The recognition that reformation is the constant business of the Church appears in many ecclesiastical documents, from the Brief of Alexander III offering to confer Legatine powers on a suitable Scottish bishop—*ad reformationem ipsius ecclesiae*, 1159, and the Bull of Honorius III, 1225, empowering the Scottish bishops to hold a Provincial Council “to correct *enormia*, to reform morals and to publish canons to that effect.” Mandates summoning such Councils, down to the last one in 1559, contain among other words of common form the expression *deformata reformare*. This is true of David Beaton's mandates, though his Councils or Conventions had little enough to do with reformation. It was Beaton's successor, Hamilton, who took up the matter of reform in earnest in answer to demands that had been growing in volume during the reign of James V.

James's reign was singularly unhappy and unfortunate. Crowned in infancy on the death of his father at Flodden his long minority encouraged faction which did not cease with his assumption of personal rule at the age of 16 in 1528. Vigorous in the interests of law and order he contrived to quarrel with several of his powerful nobles, and was driven to rely on his prelates for counsel, especially Cardinal Beaton who became Archbishop of St. Andrews in 1539. All the time there was Henry VIII, his uncle, now cajoling, now bullying, always fomenting trouble in the endeavour to detach James from the French Alliance and, after 1531, from the Roman Obedience. The reign which began with Flodden and ended with Solway Moss was marked throughout by tensions between the two governments, and embittered hostility to England on the part of the Scottish people, which Beaton knew well how to use.

In the early years of the reign Luther's Reformation began. In 1525 the Scots Parliament prohibited the importation of Lutheran writings,

and in 1528 Patrick Hamilton, the first Scots Lutheran was burnt at the stake. When Henry VIII broke with Rome, James's attitude became important. In spite of his uncle's persuasions he showed no inclination to follow his example beyond using the situation to obtain Papal sanction for an exaction from the clergy, ostensibly for his new College of Justice. Beaton had a free hand in proceeding against a number of humble heretics. It is possible that Henry's example and propaganda may have had influence in some quarters. But for all his fair words to Henry and some sharply anti-clerical remarks, James held aloof, so that his reaction to the performance of Lindsay's *Satire of the Three Estates* (1540) is somewhat surprising. He is reported as having spoken roughly to his attendant bishops "exhorting them to reform their fashions and manner of living, telling them that if they failed to take heed he would send half a dozen of the proudest of them to be dealt with by his uncle of England." Certainly in his last Parliament, 1541, along with a series of Acts for the protection of ecclesiastical doctrines and ceremonies there is one entitled "For reforming of Kirks and Kirkmen," which reads—

That because the negligence of divine service the grett unhoneste in the kirk throw not making of reparation to the honor of God Almycty and to the blissit sacrament of the alter the virgine Mary and all haly sanctis. And also the unhonestie and misrule of kirkmen baith in witt knawledge and maneris is the mater and cause that the kirk and kirkmen are lychtlyit and contemnit, for remeid hereof the King's grace exhorts and prayis oppinly all archbischoppis ordinaries and other prelatis and every kirkman in his awn degree to reform thare selfis, thare obedienccaries and kirkmen under thame in habit and maneris to God and man ; and that thai cause in every kirk within thare diocy under thare jurisdictionn Cure reule reparatioun and reparaling to be honestlie and substantiouslie maid and done to the honor of God Almyty the blissit sacrament and the divine service, every kirk efter the qualite and quantite of the rentis. And giff ony persoun allegiand thame exemit and will not obey nor obtemper to thare superior in that behalf the King's grace sall find remeid tharefor at the pape's halynes. And siklik aganis the saidis prelatis giff thai be negligent.

It is perhaps noteworthy that Parliament did not require the calling of a Provincial Council to undertake these reforms, as it had done in 1536 when a clerical contribution for the College of Justice was in question. In fact no steps were taken. Soon the country was at war with England which led to the disgrace of Solway Moss and the death of the King in 1542.

But the Act was doubtless significant and was not lost sight of. It is referred to again in 1559.

For a short time in 1543 under the regency of Arran, Beaton fell from power and English influence seemed to be in the ascendant. Negotiations were far advanced for the betrothal of the infant Queen to the Prince of Wales. Preachers were found in the Regent's entourage and the use of the Bible in English was permitted in spite of a protest by the Archbishop of Glasgow. But before the end of the year Arran was reconciled to Beaton. The war was resumed, and South East Scotland had to suffer the fearful devastations inflicted by Hertford, 1544/45. It was no time for Beaton to attend the Council of Trent, which opened in 1545; but he held a convention of clergy at St. Andrews and imposed a levy towards the expenses of a delegation which never set out. He also manifested his orthodoxy by condemning Wishart to the flames. Soon Beaton was murdered in his Castle, May 1546, but as that made no difference in Scottish policy, Hertford, now Protector Somerset, in the name of Edward VI invaded Scotland, routed the Scots at Pinkie, 1547, and occupied the Eastern Lowlands as far north as Dundee. Peace was not restored till 1550.

Beaton's successor in the Primacy was John Hamilton, natural son of the first Earl of Arran and half brother of the Regent. Born in 1512 he was early placed in the Abbey of Kilwinning of which James Beaton, then Archbishop of Glasgow, was Commendator. In 1525 at the age of 13 he was made Commendator of the Great Abbey of Paisley which he held for the rest of his life. As Abbot he sat in Parliament in 1535, and again in December 1540. Soon after he left Scotland and did not return till 1543 when his brother was Regent, bringing with him the reputation of an Anglophil and a favourer of the new opinions. Very soon, however, Cardinal Beaton gained him over to his side and he had much to do with the reconciliation of the Cardinal and the Regent, who combined to have him promoted to Dunkeld in 1544, in the face of the opposition of a Papal nominee. The latter had to content himself with a pension from the revenues of Dunkeld until he succeeded Hamilton in 1554. By way of compensation Hamilton was allowed to retain Paisley "since it was fitting that religion should be supported not only with dignity but with substance and riches."¹ Actually Hamilton was not consecrated till August 1546, three months after the murder of Beaton. Already, however, there was move to have him translated to St. Andrews, and this was effected at Rome in November 1547, though his enthronement was delayed till June 1549. Immediately thereafter (July) he presided over

¹ Herkless and Hannay: *Archbishops*, V, p. 24.

a General Provincial Council at Linlithgow, presumably summoned by himself, and so initiated a decade of reforming activity which is the subject of this paper.

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The *Statutes* enacted at Linlithgow have not been preserved. They were re-enacted and expanded at a new or adjourned Council which met in the Church of the Blackfriars in Edinburgh in November of the same year. Of this we have a considerable account,¹ though not so much in some respects as we might desire. It would have been interesting to have had the opening address delivered by "a reverend and very learned licentiate in theology," but even his name is omitted. We are told nothing of the procedure adopted, or of the debates which presumably took place. We do know that the Decree on Reformation adopted by the Council of Trent at its fifth Session (June 1546) and accepted in its entirety at Edinburgh occasioned stormy debate at Trent; but for Edinburgh we are left to speculate as we will on the basis of the list of those present at the Council. The royal Commandators of St. Andrews, and of Kelso and Melrose combined would be too young to say much. But were the Friars Preachers and Minors Observants as unobtrusive as the record of the Council suggests? Was Quintin, Abbot of Crossraguel, future author of the *Compendius Tracte*, a leading spirit at the Council? And did he give Patrick Bishop of Moray and John Archbishop of St. Andrews some uncomfortable moments? Many proposals for reform were made and, it would appear, adopted unanimously. But we are without the means of judging the earnestness and sincerity behind them.

The opening narrative of the Edinburgh Council sets forth that "The present Convention has been assembled in the Holy Ghost, conformably to the precept of the Apostle Paul (Acts 20:28) for the glory of God to restore the tranquility and preserve the integrity of the ecclesiastical estate. Intently observing how many heresies cruelly assail the Lord's flocks, and wishing utterly to extirpate the same, it has resolved that it should follow the example of the skillful physician and first of all seek by careful study to discover the causes and occasions of the sore maladies wherewith the morals of churchmen have now for a long time been corrupted, and thereafter take thought for and provide suitable remedies." Nothing is said of these studies but—"Whereas there appear to have been mainly two causes and roots of evils which have stirred up among us so great dissensions and occasions of heresies, to wit, the corruption of morals and profane obscenity of life in churchmen of almost all ranks,

¹ Joseph Robertson: *Concilia Scotiae*. Translated by David Patrick (Scot. Hist. Soc.).

together with crass ignorance of literature and of all the liberal arts, and from these two sources principally spring many abuses ; this Holy Synod and Provincial Council has determined to apply remedies and put a check on these mischiefs so far as it can adequately to the exigencies of the times."

This diagnosis is certainly remarkable. Unhappily it is only too well founded. It can be illustrated in detail not only from the writings of satirists and Protestants, but also from those of devoted friends of the old Church, e.g. Wingate, Kennedy, Hay and others.¹ The evils were indeed notorious and had been pointed out two years before in the Act of Parliament already referred to. This Council found it necessary to decree that books of popular rhymes and songs containing calumnies and slanders defamatory of churchmen should be confiscated and burnt. (224) Its confession of guilt was not for publication. Nevertheless so far as it can be taken as an act of sincere corporate repentance and represents a will to amend it deserves to be treated with respect. The fathers do not throw the blame upon the system under which they live, of which to be sure they were beneficiaries. Accepting the system they take the blame for its abuses upon themselves, and seek such remedies as are within their power. "Concerning reformation of morals" guidance was found in a decree of the reforming Council of Basel ; and "concerning reformation in the matter of instruction hitherto neglected and preaching of God's word" recourse was had to the Tridentine Decree on Reformation.

At its close the Council decreed that another should meet without further summons on Thursday 14th August 1550 in the same place, or in St. Andrews should anything untoward occur to prevent a meeting in Edinburgh. By that time the Peace of Boulogne had been signed, (April 1550) and Scotland was at last free from war and occupation. A considerable number of eminent clerics did assemble in Edinburgh about the appointed time and condemned Adam Wallace as a heretic and had him burnt at the stake on the Castlehill. Whether this was a Provincial Council or not, another did meet in Edinburgh in January 1552, and ratified with some additions the Statutes of all previous Councils held by the Primate. It notes that "owing to troublous times and their manifold embarrassments certain of these statutes which had dates fixed for putting them into execution had not yet been carried into effect." There is to be no further delay "as each one of the ordinaries shall be prepared to answer for the performance of his duty before the strict judgment of God." Some of the previous Statutes are repeated with slight amendments and a few are added. It is noted that "the greatest neglect of the divine

¹ W. Murison : *Sir David Lyndsay*. Cambridge University Press. pp. 120 ff.

mysteries has prevailed among the subjects of the realm within these last few years, so that very few indeed out of the most populous parishes deign to be present at the sacrifice of holy mass on Sundays and other festivals, or to attend the preaching of God's word." People who wilfully absent themselves are to be noted by the curate and reported for punishment, likewise those who behave irreverently in Church or churchyard. This had been dealt with by Parliament in 1551. (*A.P.S.* II, p. 485). More surprising is the remark (253) that "the many frightful heresies which have within the last few years run riot in many diverse parts of this realm have now at last been checked by the providence of Almighty God, the singular goodwill of princes and the vigilance and zeal of prelates for the Catholic faith, and seem almost extinguished." I have not been able to discover any conspicuous set-back suffered by Protestantism at this time at home or abroad. Can it be that the prelates in the course of the inquisitorial investigations decreed in 1549 had come to the conclusion that the trouble was not so serious as it had appeared? Wallace seems to have been the only victim. In any case there was to be no complacency. If heresy was almost extinguished, there was need for positive teaching the people; and until the clergy generally were trained for preaching, or until the special preachers arranged for in 1549 were in the field, the Council approved a Book submitted to it by the Primate, Archbishop Hamilton's *Catechism*, which the ordinary parish clergy were enjoined to read to their people continuously Sunday by Sunday, with due care as to the proper enunciation of words and sentences, and with as intelligent and lively an interest as possible, lest the people should mock the reader. One is reminded that the Reformed Church perforce had to employ "readers" where qualified Ministers were not available. The Church of England too was satisfied with readers whose work Hooker defends, a little half-heartedly one may feel, against the Puritan demand for preachers in all churches.¹ Hamilton, it should be added, showed his concern for the provision of preachers by finding, in 1553, a further endowment for St. Mary's College, St. Andrews, the foundation of a predecessor, James Beaton.

Power was now passing from the Hamiltons. In 1549 the infant queen had been sent to France for safety, and was thus beyond their reach. From 1550 there was a move to transfer the Regency to the Queen Mother, a sister of the Guises and a surer support of a Francophil policy. This was accomplished in 1554, and, though Arran was compensated with the French Duchy of Châtelherault, he and his family passed into a mild form of opposition to the government. The accession of the Romanist Mary Tudor in England (1553) brought no easing of the situation in that

¹ *Eccl. Pol.*, V, xx.

quarter, for by her marriage with Philip of Spain she was committed sooner or later to war with France, and it became French policy to arm Scotland and supply it with troops. But of war with England in the interests of France the Scots had had their fill. They would not consent to the Regent's request for a standing army, and they resented the presence of French troops and the promotion of Frenchmen to influential positions in the government. In the winter of 1557 negotiations began for the marriage of the Queen to the Dauphin, and again the overbearing attitude of France gave offence. When after the marriage (24th April 1558) three of the Scots Commissioners died at Dieppe on the way home, and the others on their return presented a request for the Crown Matrimonial for the Queen's husband suspicion and opposition were fully aroused. The Regent had to use all her charm and diplomacy with all parties until Parliament should meet in December 1558 if there was to be any hope of obtaining this final symbol of political union with France.

Meantime Protestantism was advancing. Scotland too harboured Marian refugees, though strangely enough not as yet John Knox. Not till the autumn of 1555 did he come on what he intended to be a brief visit, which however was extended till July 1556. During these months he did much in Edinburgh, Angus and Ayrshire to encourage the Protestants who had grown in numbers and now included many of the gentry. Summoned to appear before an ecclesiastical tribunal in Edinburgh in May, Knox came with so powerful an escort that "that synod held not." Instead he preached openly in Edinburgh and was burnt, in effigy, after his departure. From this time date the beginnings of Reformed Church organisation. Iconoclastic riots occurred occasionally, and ribald ballads attacking the clergy were in circulation in spite of all that could be done to suppress them. In December 1557 the First Covenant, signed by five powerful nobles, made Protestantism a political party to be reckoned with, and the Archbishop's attempt to detach the Earl of Argyll was unavailing. The burning of Myln, an aged priest, at St. Andrews in April 1558 increased the bitterness ; and the summoning of the preachers to Holyrood in July gave the Protestants an opportunity to show their strength. Petitions poured in to the Regent with varied demands, and, with the question of the Crown Matrimonial to be settled, she had to speak fair words to all. In this way she persuaded the Protestant Lords to withhold the petition they had drawn up for presentation to Parliament. She also prevented the *Protestation* which they did read from being recorded, promising to remember what was protested and later at a more convenient time to put good order to all things which were now in controversy.

Early in the following year, 1559, negotiations were afoot which were

to lead to the Peace of Cateau Cambrésis, and the Regent doubtless understood that France and Spain were seeking to put aside their rivalries and to combine to crush Protestantism. She therefore abandoned her temporarily assumed policy of toleration and astonished the Protestant Lords, who reminded her of her promise, by saying that "It became not subjects to burden their Princes with promises further than it pleaseth them to keep the same." Action had nevertheless to be taken. The demands of the Protestants might be ignored, but there were more moderate *Articles proponit to the Quene Regent be sum temporall Lordis and Barronis* friendly towards the Church and desirous of seeing it purified and rendered more effective. They took their stand on the Parliamentary legislation of 1541 and upon the Conciliar Statutes of 1549-52 "of the quhilkis thar hes folowit nan or litill fruict as yitt, bot rathare the Spirituale Estate is deteriorate, nor emends be ony sic persuasion as hes bene hidertils usit." A number of particular proposals were made, none of them new or revolutionary, unless the proposal that "the Common Prayers with Litanies in our vulgar toun be said in evry peroch kirk upon Sondays and uther Haly Dayis efter the Devin service of the Mess, and that the Evening Prayers be said efternein likwyse," be held to be so.

The Regent passed these *Articles* to the Primate, "piously and graciously" requesting him to summon a Provincial Council, which he accordingly did in the usual form. It is to meet "For the tillage of the Lord's field . . . to reform deformities . . . to remove contentions . . . and to consider measures for the conservation, maintainance and defence of the ecclesiastical liberty of the whole Scotican kirk, and of her privileges and immunities" which "Lutheranism, Calvinism and many other nefarious heresies, everywhere being propagated in the realm, strive to disturb, destroy and subvert." The date appointed for meeting was March 1st 1559, but further mandates had to be issued to secure a larger attendance by April 6th. The deliberations of the Council were "assisted by the aid, co-operation and patronage of our most noble and most Christian Princess, Mary, Queen Dowager and Regent of the realm, whose pious goodwill we have experienced not only in the defence of this our realm from the fierce assaults of foreign enemies, but also in the administration of justice throughout the realm, as well as in the preservation, maintenance and advancement of true religion." The names of those participating are not recorded, but the two Archbishops were present together with their suffragans, also vicars-general, abbots, priors, commendators, deans, provosts, professors of Holy Scripture, rectors and other learned churchmen representing the Church of Scotland. Among the records of the Council are the *Articles* "proponit be the lords," which were

discussed, according to Bishop Lesley. Some of the suggestions were accepted and formulated as Statutes, but two of them, ecclesiastical appointments and prayers in the "vulgar toung" were pronounced to be *ultra vires* for the Council, as no doubt they were. For the most part it contented itself with repeating and strengthening the earlier Statutes. It was dissolved sometime in April. On May 2nd John Knox landed at Leith, and soon "the uproar for religion" had begun.

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It is time now to look more particularly at the remedies proposed for the ills afflicting the Church during a decade in which its position was rapidly deteriorating.

I

The Clergy as professed examples of the Christian life have at all times been a sitting pigeon for the shafts of criticism. In the 16th century, whether because of actual deterioration, absolute or relative, of clerical morals, or "from lack of faith" (on the part of the laity) as Bishop Fisher of Rochester put it, criticism became sharper, and the laity took a hand in it. As we have seen the Provincial Council of 1549 handsomely acknowledged the vices of the clergy, and its first group of Statutes, 171 to 187 as enumerated by Robertson and his translator, deals with their reformation. Naturally Regulars and Seculars must be treated separately, and monasteries and nunneries are the subject of three Statutes. (182-184) Non-exempt monasteries are to be visited by the bishop of the diocese, who is to report to the next Council whatever he may find amiss. As regards exempt houses the bishop is to make enquiry in the neighbourhood and to report any rumours of indiscipline or maladministration. Knox tells us what rumours might be heard in the neighbourhood of Scone, of which Patrick Hepburn, Bishop of Moray, was Commendator.¹ In general, "Whereas it is manifest that the discipline of canons-regular and of monks has been weakened and relaxed in great part by the negligence of those whose duty it is to exercise supervision over them, the present convention exhorts in the Lord all and sundry, the Abbots, Priors, Commendators and Administrators of exempt monasteries, severally and collectively, to strive as becomes good pastors to reform the life morals piety and learning of the monks, and to bring them back to the first state of the monastic institution that so piety may flourish in their midst, and the murmurs of the outside world be silenced." Meantime the ecclesiastical and if need be the civil power is to be invoked to bring apostate monks and nuns back to their convents. This seems an extraordinarily weak

¹ Knox: *History*. Dickinson's Edition, p. 191

and unrealistic handling of the problem. An obvious evil was the commend-system itself, but the Council was powerless to deal with it except to enjoin that commendators and administrators are to have their letters of appointment scrutinized and their obligations brought home to them. It will be remembered that the Primate himself had retained Paisley *in commendam* as an additional source of income. There were others, lay and cleric, members of the Council, whose Papal provision was equally indubitable. But in fact the whole monastic system stood in need of drastic revision.

With regard to Seculars some of the Statutes deal with what may seem trivial matters ;—clerical dress; the wearing of beards, which it is alleged, are the subjects of frequent railleries on the part of the laity ; a proper tonsure ; temperance in diet ; observance of the prescribed fasts ; the reading of Scripture at churchmen's tables to rule out unprofitable tales. Statute 185, coming where it does, presumably refers to grosser crimes occasionally committed by clerics, which are to be proceeded against first by charitable admonition, then by censures and interdict, invoking the secular arm if necessary. With regard to all these *enormia* it is the duty of the Rural Deans to make inquisition privately and publicly, and to report faithfully to the bishop under oath. It is a serious offence to accept a bribe to cover up any scandal. One Statute applies specially to Prelates (181) who are warned to keep respectable households, free of gamblers, fornicators, drunkards, brawlers and profane swearers. Perhaps it is worth noting that drunkenness does not seem to have been a prevalent vice in clerics.

So far the Council has come to grips with nothing really serious. I have left to the end of this section the delinquency with which the Council began, and which undoubtedly must be regarded as its most intractable problem. For centuries the Church had demanded celibacy from its clergy, and pledged them to it in their ordination vows. The reiteration of the demand again and again is evidence of the value set on celibacy but also of the fact that the ideal was never attained. Of course, Canon Law being also the law of the land, a cleric could not legally marry. If he lived with a woman who was his wife in all but name, he was technically a *concubinarius*, but this seems to have been a less serious crime than it would have been to go through the forms of marriage. At all events the spirit if not the letter of the canon was set at naught in the later Middle Ages by many of the clergy from the Pope down to the humblest parish priest, and this was either connived at or condoned on payment of a fine. Of the members of this very Council the Primate and at least three of his suffragans (Aberdeen, Moray and Dunblane) were notorious *concubinarii*, and there were others ; e.g. M. Arthur Telfer, Rector of

Crimond and Canon of Aberdeen, who signed the Chapter's "counsel" to their bishop requesting that "his lordship would be so good as to show good and edificative example, in special in removing and discharging himself of the company of the gentlewoman by whom he is greatly slanderit." The offspring of the higher clergy were readily legitimated, and the Pope as readily dispensed from the canonical impediment to ecclesiastical promotion involved. In any case the stigma of illegitimacy did not prevent the daughters of bishops from marrying into the gentry or lesser nobility—with a handsome dowry. Ninian Wingate speaks of the bishops as "bringing the barons to be scions of your posterity." And Sir David Lyndsay, a satirist to be sure, makes the barons complain that they cannot get their daughters married suitably because they cannot compete with proud Prelates in the dowries they offer.¹ Nevertheless the expression "a preast's gett" was opprobrious not only in the mouth of Knox but also in that of James V, who once advised one of his nobles against such a marriage.

Obviously the situation required attention. The Council, of course, had no alternative but to reassert the rule of celibacy, using the stringent words of the decree of the Council of Basel. Clerics must put away their concubines forthwith. They may not keep their offspring in their company or have them promoted in their churches or "under any pretext marry their daughters to barons or make their sons barons out of the patrimony of Christ." Such a decree must be pronounced harsh and unjust. The only just cure for what was doubtless a glaring evil would have been either to abolish the universal requirement or, that being impossible, to have insisted, as now, on very clear evidence of vocation in those entering the priesthood, even if it involved a drastic reduction in the number of ordinands. Nevertheless the requirement was repeated in 1552, and again insisted on in 1559, though some modification was made in the severity of the treatment of the children. As a token of sincerity it is recorded ;—"That the most reverend lord, John, Archbishop of St. Andrews, Primate of this realm, *Legatus Natus* etc., and the most reverend lord, James, Archbishop of Glasgow, may not seem to lay grievous burdens on their reverend suffragans and lower clergy, while they perhaps are too freely indulgent to themselves in virtue of their privileges and exemptions, they have spontaneously submitted themselves for the good example of others, to the advice, inquisition and reproof of the reverend fathers the Bishop of Dunkeld (Chisholm) and the Bishops designate of Ross (Henry Sinclair) and Whithorn (the notorious Alexander Gordon, Archbishop of Athens) the Dean of Restalrig (John Sinclair), the Provincial of the Friars Preachers (Greyson) and John Wynram, professor of

¹ Murison. *Op. cit.*, p. 92.

Sacred Theology, sub-prior of St. Andrews." These seem to have been appointed as a special commission to study the whole question of the observance of the canon. They never reported on their diligence, and three of them, Greysen, Wynram and Gordon, are soon after found among the Reformers.

II

The evil of concubinage was no doubt rampant in all ranks of the clergy, most conspicuously in the higher ranks. The same can hardly be said of "crass ignorance," which becomes more evident as we descend the clerical ladder. Bishops and dignified clergy would have an education as good as that of any of their contemporaries in Scotland. Even among Rectors, if we may judge from those summoned to the Provincial Council of 1559 from the Deanery of Lanark and the Diocese of Whithorn,¹ there was a high percentage of graduates, for what that is worth. These were no doubt picked men. Hamilton's *Catechism*, if drawn up *ad hoc* between 1550 and 1552, is evidence of a ready store of systematic learning available in the Church, presumably in St. Andrews where Major had taught and Wynram was professor of Theology. But among the parish clergy, vicars and curates, it is evident that even elementary education was slight. However they may have got through their Latin Service Book,—the ribald rhymes of the time and one of the Articles of the Temporal Lords suggest that it was but poorly,—the rules laid down in 1552, that rectors vicars and curates may read the vernacular Catechism to their people without exposing themselves to ridicule, are very elementary. The book itself was produced and circulated because they were not expected to be able to preach. This state of affairs was no doubt the logical if not the necessary result of what Wingate describes as the Church's "dumb doctrine in exalting ceremonies only, without any declaration of them." The Protestant exaltation of the sermon at least demanded a measure of clerical learning.

The legislation adopted to remedy this evil seems painfully inadequate. Little is said of improvement of schools and universities, though they were ecclesiastical preserves. The First Book of Discipline was very thorough here, but if course its authors have the advantage of being borne on the wings of "devote imagination." One school only is mentioned, The Grammar School of St. Andrews, but only for an administrative reason,—to fix responsibility for the appointment of a competent master. Statute 201 seems to show that the universities were not effective. Students are no longer to be admitted without proficiency in Latin,

¹ Patrick: *Statutes*, pp. 153-5.

the language of instruction, and are not to be admitted to the degree of bachelor or master unless found qualified by strict examination! Statute 200, on the teaching of Holy Scripture and Theology, is not comprehensive, but seems to indicate a desire to return to an earlier and better scholasticism, the "approved" authors named being Peter Lombard, Thomas Aquinas and Bonaventura. No course of instruction is laid down as compulsory for those intending to enter the priesthood, except that the demands of the sacred canons as to qualifications in morals, learning and "title" are to be strictly observed and made known to ordinands. It would appear that "title" was regarded as of supreme importance. For the next three years none are to be ordained, however qualified in learning and morals, unless thay are beneficed persons or monks or have a "title," i.e. have been nominated to a benefice worth £20 Scots. No doubt any reduction in the number of ordinands was a desirable reform, but the method adopted hardly seems the best one to attain the object in view. One might have expected a stricter control of ordinations, but evidently that was not to be thought of. Even in 1559 when it was enacted that holders of benefices "must have the orders required by the livings they hold" (271) this was not required as a condition of collation. The idea that the holding of a benefice necessarily involved the personal performance of its spiritual functions was a novel one. The First Book of Discipline makes no reference to it, because, no doubt, its authors, concentrating on the pastoral functions of ministers, thought of them as enjoying a salary out of the patrimony of the Kirk, not as holding a benefice in the traditional sense. Not till the Convention of Leith, 1572, was the relation of the working ministry to the benefice system dealt with, and then in a way that prepared difficulties for the Melvillian Presbyterians. That the two things were separable seems to have occurred at least to the leaders of the Non-Intrusion Party during the Ten-years Conflict. Meantime the Council of 1549 was content to exhort patrons not to appoint worthless vicars or curates, reminding them of the punishment that awaits them at the strict tribunal of God, as also of their liability to canonical censures. (206).

For those already in office there is great inequality of treatment. Vicars and curates are to be examined withing the ensuing year as to residence and fitness for their duties, and if found insufficient are to be compelled to resign. (203-4) Rectors are more gently dealt with, though they were the real culprits. They are held bound to preach in person four times a year, ("more often" in 1559) but they may do so by a deputy, whose fee they will have to pay. Youthful rectors must render themselves "capable as soon as practicable by studying at the public seminaries," holding the rectory as a sort of bursary subject to the deduction of the

fee due to the preachers of the four statutory sermons. Rectors who are elderly and incapable of being taught must perform the duty by deputy and are bound to attend the preaching. Rectors who are corporate bodies, monasteries, cathedral chapters, nunneries, must supply the four sermons annually at their own expense. The only provision made for the improvement of clerical education is the ordinance that there are to be a theologian and a canonist on every cathedral staff who are to lecture in public on Scripture and Canon Law, and whose lectures the Canons and clergy may attend "if they wish." This arrangement was to start on 29th September, 1550. It had not started in 1552 when the Statute was repeated more peremptorily. (241) It had to be repeated again in 1559. The Reformed Church took this problem much more seriously with its limited resources. The weekly Exercise was the best it could do, but it made the most of it.

Here again special arrangements had to be made for the monasteries. Every monastery is to provide itself with a theologian who is to lecture on Holy Scripture within its walls. More interesting, however, is the attempt (198) to revive an old practice which Chrystal had revived in Kinloss. "In the case of the monasteries, that there may go forth from them and flourish anew men of letters and preachers eminent in sacred eloquence and the fruitful nurture of souls, this holy convention enjoins that in proportion to the resources of the said monasteries two religious or one having a special aptitude for literary studies and good natural abilities shall be sent to the nearest universities or others there to remain for at least four years engaged in the study of theology and Holy Scripture." On the completion of their period of study, others shall be sent to do likewise. A list of the monasteries follows with the obligation of each in this matter. Hamilton has to send two from Paisley. Perhaps the young Prior of St. Andrews would not be greatly burdened by having to send three from his Priory to the University in the same city. But the Commendator of Melrose might have grudged having to send two. Scone, strangely enough, escapes mention, accidentally it may be. Whether this Statute ever came into operation we do not know. It may well be doubted. The days when monasteries could be regarded as homes of learning were long past.

III

The interest in clerical education was motivated by a concern for the preaching of the Word of God to the people, which was felt to be, next after a reform of morals, the best method of Church defence. The Council of Trent had declared that the preaching of the Gospel is no less important than lecturing on it and that "this is the principal duty of bishops."

Parish priests too, either personally or by competent deputy, must teach their people the things necessary to salvation, as also the vices to be avoided and the virtues to be pursued, all briefly and simply in language suited to their own capacity and that of their people. The Tridentine Decree, *De Reformatione*, is adopted in its entirety and particular points are dealt with in special Statutes. (a) As already said Rectors must preach four times a year in their churches either personally or by deputy. Curates are to note that the four statutory sermons have been preached and when, and to report to the bishop. (b) In addition the cathedral theologian already mentioned is to be available for preaching in the churches within the diocese, and the monastic theologian in the appropriated churches of his monastery. Naturally nothing is said in 1549 of preaching by vicars and curates; but it is surprising that no clear reference is made to preaching by the Friars, though preaching was regarded as their speciality, and the Scottish heads of the various orders of Friars were present at the Council, including the Provincial of the Friars Preachers! On the other hand (c) a remarkable scheme was drawn up for "the permanent establishment and maintenance of preachers throughout the province." (219) Bishops and Heads of monastic houses are "to assign" each one benefice for the maintenance of a preacher. This was done at least on paper, and the list is appended to the Statute. I find it incomprehensible. Four of the bishops "assign" for this purpose the archdeaconry of the diocese, and Orkney "assigns" the Provostry of Kirkwall (his cathedral Dean?) This would mean diverting to other purposes the emoluments of what might be supposed to be important and indispensable offices. Again, all the monasteries except Balmerino "assign" vicarages, so avoiding apparently all cost to themselves, and denuding these parishes of such ministrations as they had enjoyed. In any case such an establishment must have been a long-term project. Even if preachers had been available the "assigned" benefices would only become available as and when they "vaiked." Precaution is taken against a well-known device for avoiding a vacancy, resignation by the incumbent in favour of a successor. No more is heard of the scheme, for by 1552 Hamilton had thought of another way.

There is every reason to believe that Archbishop Hamilton was genuinely anxious to have Catholic truth taught to the people of Scotland, and that he hoped "within few yeiris" to have "ane sufficient nowmer of Catholyk and abil preacheouris." Meantime he must make use of the available resources, the ordinary parochial clergy, in the urgent task of the immediate future. But they must be supplied with ready-made materials. It is unfortunate that we have no information as to the authorship of what is known as Hamilton's *Catechism*, which is admitted on

all hands to be an admirable document. It may be presumed to have emanated from St. Andrews, where it was printed at Hamilton's expense. Vague tradition has attributed it to Wynram, professor of Theology and Sub-prior of the Priory, who later joined the reformers and became Superintendent of Fife, who also had a share in the composition of the Scots Confession and the First Book of Discipline. At all events the Council of 1552 took full responsibility. "The present convention decrees and ordains that a certain book written in our vulgar Scottish tongue and, after the most elaborate revision, approved by the opinions and votes of the most prudent prelates in the whole realm and of the most learned theologians and other churchmen present, shall be put into the hands of rectors, vicars and curates as much for the instruction of themselves as of the Christian people committed to their care; which book it orders to be called a catechism, i.e. a plain and easy statement and explanation of the rudiments of the faith" containing "a true and faithful interpretation of the Decalogue according to the sense and meaning of the Catholic Church, a plain orthodox and Christian instruction on the articles of the Creed and the Seven Sacraments, as also a complete and edifying explanation of the Lord's Prayer and the Angelic Salutation (the 'Hail Mary')." The book was ordered to be printed in the name of the archbishop and of the Council, and circulated to rectors, vicars and curates in all dioceses. It was not to be put into the hands of laymen indiscriminately, but was to be read to congregations every Sunday when "their cummes na preacheour," for half an hour before Mass, with scrupulous attention to the text and manner of delivery, under penalty of a fine for failure to comply. No questions or discussion was to be allowed, for which the average parish priest was not intellectually equipped.

Bellesheim has no fault to find with the doctrine of the *Catechism*, though some scholars, notably Dr. T. G. Law,¹ have pointed out features that seem to suggest a mediating document. E.g. No mention is made of the Pope or the Petrine prerogative; while repeatedly doctrinal authority is attributed to General Councils, as if the Conciliar view, taught by John Major, were the accepted one. The doctrine of Justification by faith seems almost implied in the repeated stress on "trew and leiffand faith." and certainly the Tridentine doctrine is not followed. At all events it is an eminently practical, devout and non-controversial statement of Mediaeval doctrine. It thus fits in admirably with Hamilton's evident policy to promote positive teaching of the central Catholic verities. It may have been on his suggestion that the learned men of the Priory and University of St. Andrews, in 1547, abandoned controversy and

¹ *Introduction* to his edition of the *Catechism*, XXXIV ff.

polemics in their discourses in the parish church, and turned to positive teaching, a procedure which Knox attributed to "craft."

The Council of 1559 is still insistent on the necessity of preaching, and drew up a list of doctrines which were in special need of homiletic handling, but it still assumed that the reading of the *Catechism* will be the normal method of instruction in parish churches on Sundays and Holy Days. The Temporal Lords, too, make a clear distinction between preachers of the Word of God, and the ordinary parish priesthood. The latter are only required to be able distinctly and plainly to read the *Catechism* and to administer the sacraments in the proper form. But in this connection they make a further interesting suggestion, viz., that before any sacrament is administered "a godly and fruitful declaration set forth in Inglis young be first shewin to the people" with interrogation as to their understanding of the "effect cause and strength" of the rite,—a sort of recognition of the truth so strongly insisted on by the Reformers that Word and Sacrament belong together. As the First Book of Discipline puts it,—" We cannot judge him a dispensator of God's mysteries that in no wise can break the bread of life to the fainting and hungry souls ; neither judge we that the sacraments can be rightly ministered by him in whose mouth God has put no sermon of exhortation."¹ The Council adopted the suggestion and authorised the production of suitable Exhortations to be used before the administration of the Sacraments. If these were actually prepared, only that for the Eucharist has been preserved, the so-called "Twa-penny Faith."

Hamilton's laudable efforts to promote the preaching of God's Word seem to have been fruitless. Even the *Catechism* seems to have been still-born ; and among the multitudes of the Scottish clergy not one single outstanding preacher arose to stay the oncoming Reformation. How shall they preach except they be sent ? and such sending was beyond the power of Hamilton or his Provincial Council. The strength of the Reformation lay in the fact that it produced preachers of firm convictions, and that it made preaching quite centrally important among the functions of the ministry. To this the First Book of Discipline bears eloquent witness.

IV

Perhaps it may be put down to the credit of the Councils that they concerned themselves so deeply with reforms affecting the clergy personally and the performance of their duties. No doubt it was rather late in the day to be making Statutes about things so elementary, and it is not surprising

¹ IV (3), Dickinson's Edition, p. 287.

that long neglect brought its own nemesis. It is quite evident that the action visualised by the Councils could not have provided in any measurable time an effective parochial ministry, which was the urgent need of the moment. In any case the parish priests were the victims of a system itself in dire need of reform. Statutes dealing with reform of the institution there are, less picturesque and more technical than the others, but possibly even more important as closely affecting the every-day life of ordinary people. Improvements in ecclesiastical administration, by removing grievances widely felt, might have done much to prevent or arrest alienation from the church and clergy. But this was much more difficult because it affected vested interests, many of them beyond the control of a Provincial Council.

Some abuses were dealt with in 1549, e.g. misappropriation of the funds of hospitals and endowments for the poor (a matter dealt with later more stridently in the *Beggars' Summons*) ; dilapidation of benefices through feuing or alienation of glebes and lands, leading to non-residence on the part of the parochial clergy ; unions of benefices, the holding of incompatible benefices in plurality, and appropriations of parish revenues to Cathedrals, Monasteries and latterly of Colleges, all tending to deprive the parishes of their due ministrations. All these things were ordered to be carefully scrutinised, and abuses corrected where possible. Presumably members of the Council knew quite well how drastic an overhaul this would have meant for the whole ecclesiastical structure if anything remarkable was to be achieved, but they would also know how little conciliar decrees would avail against papal exemptions, privileges and dispensations. In 1559 most of these matters came up again, including now the repair of dilapidated churches, which seems to have been a special interest of Hamilton's. The Articles of the Temporal Lords called attention to others. The old grievance of the mortuary dues or offerings were dealt with in detail. They were not abolished, but the very poor were relieved entirely. The farming of teinds, which had met with considerable resistance "during the last ten years" was made less vexatious for the peasantry, and the Easter offerings were so regulated that the appearance of their being payments for the Sacrament should be avoided. Above all proposals are made for the drastic curtailment of procedure in the Consistorial courts. The Lords had asked for an improvement in clerical appointments, and it was pointed out to them, according to Bishop Leslie, that these lay with the patrons and, in the case of the higher offices, with the Crown. The Council therefore had no power in the matter. Nevertheless in Statute 279 it is laid down that no presentee is to be collated to a benefice unless he shall "after careful examination be found by the ordinary to be fit for the exercise and fulfilment of the

duties attached to such benefice"; moreover that "our most serene lady, the Queen, be earnestly and humbly petitioned not to nominate present or suffer to be promoted to bishoprics, abbacies, prelacies or any other preferment appertaining to royal presentation, anyone unless in morals learning and age he shall be found fit and qualified to perform with honour to God and benefit to the people the duties incumbent on the holder of the said benefice Likewise the Council has thought it expedient that supplicatory letters should be sent to our most holy lord the Pope, praying him not to promote or suffer to be promoted to prelacies or any other preferments any one save such as are qualified in respect of age morals or learning."

This is to go to the heart of the matter. Since 1488 all bishops and abbots had been "provided" by the Pope on the nomination of the Crown, by an arrangement entered into to serve the interests of both parties, which were not necessarily the interests of the spiritual life of the Church. The bishops and abbots of the Council, who all owed their appointments to the operation of this arrangement, would not be likely to call in question the judgment of the Council of Trent,— "It is not likely that unworthy persons can extort any privileges from the Apostolic See except by suppressing the truth or by uttering falsehood." And they were, naturally, in no position to find fault with the concordat of 1488, as Bellesheim does. In fact, even if a strong will had been present, the power of a Provincial Council to reform the ecclesiastical structure was extremely limited, at least without the co-operation of a strong and determined King. The Scottish Councils barely touched the evils of the existing benefice-system, whereby the over-great wealth of the Church was concentrated in the hands of relatively few persons who had sufficient influence to secure high appointments, many of whom were not even in Holy Orders. They evaded the question partly because they could not solve it, but perhaps more because they would not. It was left to the authors of the First Book of Discipline freely to imagine a scrapping of the whole system, and a redistribution of the patrimony of the Kirk in order to secure more effective ecclesiastical and educational arrangements. The system, with the vested interests it had created, was too strong for them and remained to create many a difficulty for the Reformed Church, down to even 1843, and even to 1925.

V

The Reforming Councils all recognise that the best defence of the Church against heresy would be a reform of clerical morals and learning, followed by effective preaching of God's Word and the positive teaching of Catholic truth. The removal of grievances of an immediate practical

nature would also help. But they could hardly be expected to forego the use of another weapon that was still at their disposal. In the last resort appeal may be made to the law of the realm and the civil arm for the suppression of error.

The Scottish Parliament had again and again recognised and guaranteed the liberties and immunities of Haly Kirk, and in 1424 had put the civil arm at its disposal for the punishment of heretics by death. The Act was directed against Lollardy, and soon two Wycliffites were condemned by the Church and handed over for punishment according to law by the State. But for a century this procedure was rarely necessary. The next sufferer was Patrick Hamilton in 1528. Cardinal Beaton made several victims, and was regarded by Protestants as a notorious persecutor. His successor, Hamilton, claims to have been blamed for mildness, perhaps with some justification. He was, however, present as Bishop of Dunkeld at a meeting on 18th March 1547 of the Regent's Council which received and recorded a petition from the Bishops, Prelates and Kirkmen, praying for their Lordship's help and assistance to the spiritual jurisdiction against heretics, and which answered that, if the heretics were named, "his Grace and the Lordis temporal shall . . . caus the lawis of the realme to be execute upon thame ay as he is requirit tharto conforme to the lawis of Halykirk."¹

In Scotland the machinery for dealing with heresy had hitherto been scanty. The Council of 1549 decreed the organisation of a nation-wide inquisition. Every diocese is now to have its *Inquisitor Hereticae Pravitatis*. Those appointed are to be "men of piety, integrity and learning versed in theology. They must also be men of good life and good name and of great tact ; who shall with the utmost diligence make inquisition anent heresies . . . and shall make search for condemned books written by heretics." Superiors of monastic houses "shall do likewise with their subjects . . . and ransack the cells of their monks" for heretical literature. In addition all ordinaries are to make diligent and precise inquisition every year and oftener if necessary, in accordance with the canons and customs of the realm hitherto observed. "They shall proceed with the utmost rigour of the law against heresiarchs, sacramentarians, and those who inveigh against the sacrament of the Eucharist." Unlicensed preachers are to be inhibited. To listen to them is a crime ; and the bishops' authority is to be backed by letters from the Queen. A list of errors is given for which inquisitors must be on the look-out, and against which preachers should discreetly discourse, always taking care not to put heretical ideas into heads hitherto innocent of them. The errors named are mostly common-

¹ Robertson : *Statuta*, I, cxlvii, note i.

places of Protestant propaganda, attacks on the sacraments, the use of images in churches, the doctrine of purgatory, the authority of General Councils, the efficacy of good works for salvation. Curiously enough nothing is said of attacks on the papacy.

We have seen the Council of 1552 congratulating itself that heresy had been checked and almost extirpated by, among other things, the zeal of prelates for the Catholic faith, although so far as is known only one heretic, Adam Wallace, had been brought to book. That Inquisitors have actually been appointed is assumed in the injunction that "if any one presume to attempt to start a discussion with a priest on the contents of the *Catechism* as recited he shall be delated to the inquisitors of heretical pravity." The Statutes anent Inquisition were ratified in 1552 and again in 1559. But by 1559 Protestantism has so advanced that it has become necessary to forbid the administration of baptism, save *in articulo mortis*, by any but priests using the accepted form of the Church; and to issue a form of conditional baptism to be used in the case of infants who have been baptised by certain Protestant preachers who are named. Already the last of the Protestant martyrs, Myln, sometime priest at Lunan, had suffered at St. Andrews in 1558, but according to Knox such proceedings were now unwillingly carried out by the civil authorities and aroused the indignation of the populace. It seems extremely improbable that the Statutes anent inquisition were put into effect to any great extent. In any case persecution became a blunt weapon, and in 1560 all jurisdiction was taken from the old Church by the law of the realm.

A decade of reforming legislation failed to save the Church. Two diametrically opposite but perhaps complementary reasons were given by contemporaries for the failure. Knox's account of the work of the Councils has been castigated as sheer misrepresentation. Obviously he did not write it in the spirit of an impartial historian and could hardly have been expected to do so. His point is that the Councils were merely tinkering with the job and that the proposed reforms were utterly inadequate. In this he may well be right whether or not we agree with him that reform must rest on a purification of doctrine. On the other hand Bishop Leslie, himself a *concubinarius* in the good old days, says—“Thay maid mony sharp statutes, and commandit all the bishoppis, abbottis, prioris, deanes, archdeanes, and all the rest thair presentlie assembled, and utheris throche all the partis of the realme, to mak thame selfis able, and use thair awin offices according to thair fondationis and callingis, within the space of sax monethes, onder the pane of deprivation; quhilk was the principall caus that a gret nomber of younge abbottis,

prioris, deanis and benefest men assisted to the interprice and practise devysed for the ourthrow of the Catholike religeon . . . fearing themselves to be put at according to the Lawis and statutes." In other words, the Statutes were adequate but many of the kirkmen were insincere. Again Leslie may be right, though in fact the "sharp statutes" he refers to were directed not against the higher clergy but against vicars and curates chiefly. It is to be noted that he does not assert that the "younge abbot-tis" etc. became Protestants. What he says may be illustrated by the action of the Bishop of Moray who, when his house of Scone was threatened with attack, offered to work politically with the Lords of the Congregation against the clergy, hoping no doubt thus to be allowed to retain his benefice, which in fact he did till his death in 1573, subject to the deduction of one third of his revenues after 1561.

The reforming legislation may have been too little or too much. Certainly it was too late even in 1549. It could only have been rendered effective by determined leadership backed by a strong government, and both were lacking. Little or nothing had been done by 1559. Hamilton, the Primate, is an enigmatic character. He attained his high office by family influence and used it to further family interests. He remained to the end a pluralist and his private life was far from exemplary. But he died in the faith he had always professed, and perhaps never abandoned hope that it might be restored by Queen Mary. Archbishop Spottiswoode tells a story which, if true, sheds some light on Hamilton's policy. According to Spottiswoode, while the First Book of Discipline was being prepared Hamilton sent a message to Knox to say "that albeit he had innovated many things and made reformation of the doctrine of the Church, whereof he could not deny but that there was some reason, yet he should do wisely to retain the old policy which had been the work of many ages, or then put a better in place thereof, before he did shake the other." This sounds no doubt like the voice of Spottiswoode, but if there is any truth in it, Hamilton would seem to have been a moderate honestly seeking just sufficient reformation to preserve the old structure. The fate of the First Book of Discipline shows that he was not without worldly wisdom. In that age ecclesiastics and preachers might propose but the politically powerful disposed. Hamilton failed because he had not the support of a strong government. The Reformers succeeded because their firm convictions enabled them to defy the powerful, and after long struggles to realise in a measure their ideal.

